

Dear Colleagues:

Personal identity theft is a growing area for organized crime. One method by which identity theft can occur is when internet criminals copy social security numbers (SSNs) that are available on internet web servers. Indeed, the Ann Arbor News recently reported such a crime that happened here in Ann Arbor.

http://blog.mlive.com/annarbornews/2008/01/id_thief_draws_probation_resti.html. This issue has been discussed both at Dean's Group and at the bi-monthly Chairs & Directors meeting.

LSAIT has informed me that SSNs are indeed stored on some web servers located across the College. Supporting data has been provided to me demonstrating that SSNs appear in old personnel forms, class grade lists, vitae, old databases, and other material that still exist on our web servers. Furthermore, the UMID once used the SSN on many university forms. In all likelihood, the owner has forgotten that the SSNs exist in these files, and they are not aware that the SSNs are now stored on internet-facing web servers which are available to criminals looking to perpetrate identity theft or fraud crimes.

Given the above, I have authorized LSAIT to scan content on all web servers in the College (and the databases on these web servers) for the occurrence of SSNs. The scan will identify files or databases that may contain SSNs and subsequently report these files to the owner. No actual SSN data will be included in the scan report. The report will only contain a list of files that are suspected of containing SSNs. The owner of these files will then be asked to remove the SSNs if, in fact, the SSNs are in the identified files or remove the complete file from the web server. Subsequent scans will be conducted to confirm that the files with SSNs have been removed. Periodic scanning for SSNs on College web servers will, henceforth, be mandatory. LSAIT will make every effort to inform each department of the scanning schedule prior to executing the actual scan process.

By request, LSAIT will also offer, as an optional service to both departments and individual computer users, the same SSN scan service for files located on servers and personal computers in the College. If this is of interest, please contact lsa-csg@umich.edu or call 936-3279.

It is unfortunate, but unavoidable given the significant dangers we face from frequent attacks from the internet, that we need to further tighten our data security standards. I hope you agree that this undertaking is necessary to protect our intellectual property, sensitive institutional and personal data, and to ensure a reliable and secure computing environment for all. Please forward this communication to your department faculty and staff.

Thank you.

Terry

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